

Highway Hawk ~ Safety Tips

Seatbelts: Each person in the front seat of a car built after 1972 must have a seatbelt on and it must be properly fastened. That means that every time you ride in a car, you must wear your seat belt. Seatbelts reduce fatalities by 45 to 55 percent. That means if you are in an accident, you are 50 percent safer with your seatbelt on than if you weren't wearing one.

Child Safety Seats: Required by Arizona law; if you have a child who is younger than four years of age or weighs less than 40 pounds, you must put the child in a safety seat. Breaking this law can result in a fine of \$50.

The proper way to cross the street: Before you cross the street, you should always stop at the corner and look for cars. Crosswalks at intersections have crossing lights. The green person walking means go and the red hand means stop. If there is a car coming, wait until the car passes or comes to a complete stop, before you step off the curb. Sometimes drivers don't see children on the sidewalk. Once the driver stops, wait until you see the crosswalk signal that shows that its okay to cross the street. If there is no light or crosswalk signal at the corner, make sure you wait until the car stops and the driver waves for you to cross. Then you know the driver has seen you. You should always walk inside the white lines of the crosswalk until you reach the other side of the street.

Turn Signals: Other drivers expect you to keep doing what you're doing. Signaling them lets them know you are planning to do something different. This gives them time to react to your move. The law requires you to signal 100 feet before you turn. You should always signal before you: Change lanes, turn at an intersection or into a driveway, enter or leave a freeway. Also, when you are going to cross a street, look for turn signals on approaching cars. Cars can turn right on red or green lights. That means a car might try to turn while you are trying to cross the street. There are hand signals for people who are on bikes.

Areas Off Limits: Storm drains, locked fences, medians, and construction areas. These areas are not playgrounds and can be very dangerous for children. There could be deep holes you might fall into or loose dirt. The large construction trucks and tractors can not see you since they are so tall. It is also unsafe for children, adults, and animals to ride in the back of a pick-up truck. If the truck comes to a quick stop or is involved in an accident, the person or animal in the

back of the truck can be thrown from the vehicle. Animals may jump out of the vehicle while it is in motion. These areas are all extremely dangerous.

Graffiti: Graffiti is against the law. Any person who recklessly defaces someone else's property is guilty of a crime. This includes more than just using spray paint. It includes any destruction of someone else's property. Punishment could include a fine, going to jail, or both. Here's a list of some possible punishments:

1. A minimum two days juvenile detention or county jail time
2. 80 hours of community service
3. Full victim restitution (pay for everything you damaged)
4. Mandatory counseling for parents and juvenile offenders at the parent's expense
5. Fines of up to \$10,000 to the parents of juvenile offenders

Dust Storms: Dust storms are common in Arizona and can sometimes reduce visibility to zero. If you run into a severe dust storm, reduce the speed of your vehicle immediately and drive carefully off the highway. Turn off your vehicle's lights to ensure other cars do not follow you off the road and hit your vehicle. Wait until the dust storm had passed before getting back on the highway. If you are walking or riding your bike, get inside quickly or seek shelter. Dust storms have a lot of flying debris that could be dangerous.

Snow Safety/Black Ice: Turn on your headlights to see and be seen. The same rules apply to bicyclists as well as motorists. Apply the brakes gently, increasing the applied pressure as you feel the tires grip the road. Do not apply the brakes to the point where the wheels lock. If the wheels lock, ease off the brakes slightly, but do not release them completely. Then apply the brakes and ease off again, repeating the process.

- Before you begin driving, clear snow and ice from all the car windows and lights. Clear ice from all bike reflectors.
- Equip your car with snow tires or chains to help prevent skidding and reduce stopping distances.
- Drive gently, do not change speed or direction suddenly.
- Slow down before stopping or turning. Driving on packed snow is much like driving on ice.
- Watch for ice on bridges and in shady areas. Bridge surfaces freeze before other road surfaces.

Rain: Slow down to increase the distance between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you to at least four seconds, or double the normal distance. Be extra careful driving during the first half hour after rain begins. Grime and oil on the road surface mix with water and make the road slippery. In heavy rain, your tires can lose all contact with the road. This is called hydroplaning. Deflated, worn, or bald tires can lose all contact with the road at much lower speeds. The best way to prevent hydroplaning is to slow down. If your car does hydroplane, take your foot off the accelerator, do not brake, avoid steering changes if possible, and hold the steering wheel firmly until your tires grip the road again. Bicycles as well as cars can hydroplane.

Bikes, Skateboards, In-line skates and Motor scooters: Make sure to always wear a helmet. Do not ride on the highway or in traffic. Wear bright colored clothes to help motorists see you better. Wear all the required safety gear such as elbow pads and knee pads. Always signal your movements for motorists.